

HOW ARE WE GETTING ON?

Centralization in Works of Charity Criticized.

Pen-Pictures of Graciously Who Preside Over Hospitals.

Some Prison Keepers Who Have Hearts Like Stone.

New York, Dec. 27.—System is a big thing.

Prominent among the social features of the closing year are the organization of charity, taking largely the place of individual helpfulness, and the growing power of the nation.

When a traveler in olden times, passing along the highway, was set upon and beaten by thieves, a good Samaritan, who found him in a most dilapidated condition, didn't present him with a card entitling him to admission to a home, nor refer him, with his individual card, to the society for the improvement of the condition of men in trouble, but straightaway he raised him from the ditch, poured oil into his wounds, cheered him as best he could, and by aiding a fellow in distress bettered himself.

That was an example to be followed by us all.

We who go to prisons, to reformatories, to hospitals, to the homes of the poor, to the sick and the impoverished, know the chief delights of human nature born of humanitarian desire and of benevolent sentiment. On the other hand who elect to transmit our earnings through the church, through organizations, may content our conscience, but we don't enrich our natures. During the past 25 years most significant changes have come over the face of this city, born largely of the tendency of the age to centralization. New York is the largest city in the country and to it come from every land and from every State in this land the poor and the crooked. Beggary is systematized, mendacity is systematized.

Recall of Every Name

and kind is systematized, and it is doubtless the experience of every generous man and woman to whom the name of the city is mentioned for help that there are quite as many cases of fraud as instances of honest suffering.

Many years ago, some 30 I find, Charles L. Bruce, whom it was my pleasure to know very well and have met him at my father's table repeatedly, organized an institution which today has a record unequalled, known as the Children's Aid Society.

Some time I will get from the officers of this marvelous organization a list of names. I doubt not that wide-spread as is its reputation, the figures will vastly enhance the interest of the story of its benevolence.

That society is a type of many others that have followed in its train, but have adhered to its rigidity of humanitarianism. The press has repeatedly exposed frauds among alleged benevolent societies. Men with the prettiness of their names do not hesitate to beseech the mouthpiece of the press, to say that they are the book of organizations whose apparent purpose is the relief of the world, but whose sole industry consists in collecting shakels from the frauds who direct and control them. Other societies, which, when properly handled, are all right, are made the media for intolerable tyranny and un-American intrusion.

Henry Bergh was a Great Man.

I've been a crank on the subject of cruelty to animals. Would there were more like him, for the treatment of horses in this city by boys in the employ of grocery stores and butchers and small express companies is only equalled in brutality and unjustifiable misuse by the ignorant and uniform-clad coachmen, who utilize checkreins and curb reins causing needless suffering and misery with the nervous susceptibility of brute beasts, who know more in a minute than their Bergh could learn in a decade.

Mr. Bergh went to the Legislature with a proposition looking to the organization of a society for the prevention of this sort of thing. It appealed to the legislative bump as well as to the popular humor, and the bill was passed without the close scrutiny it deserved. The society was vested with extraordinary powers, police and social, mandatory and peremptory.

In the hands of Mr. Bergh this was all right, because Mr. Bergh was humane and thoughtful, not only in his treatment of horses and of animals, but in his treatment of fellow beings as well, but suppose now that Mr. Bergh is dead it should fall into the hands of men crafty, and in the cant phrases of the day, "up to snuff," thoughtless for their own sake, and in the interest, how readily it might become the medium for police blackmailing and for genteel robbery; how easily it might be diverted from the noble channel out for the first time to the private pockets of discomfort and dainties of public injury.

The powers vested in the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children are phenomenal and most unwise.

As a rule the agents of the society confine themselves to proper cases for interference, but every now and then

Some Brute of an Official

looks up as a disturber of commercial relations of the public weal, of individual comfort, and of family desire, that is intolerable, yet by the letter of the law they could go even further, if they dare, so that if they were to be brought to heel by individuals before the court, unjust and inequitable as their conduct might be, it would be technically legal, and therefore untouchable by the courts.

One outraged in public sentiment by recent violations of common sense suggestion by these people, as well as by sundry private police organizations with semi-public authority, that our coming Legislature will be ready to take up the matter, and to give them by which they will in the future be guided.

But for all that—

Yes, but for all that there can be no question of the right of the time, the place, the throw off from the shoulders of individuals all responsibility for the care and custody and comforting and uplifting and helpfulness of the poor and the distressed, and to lay upon the shoulders of the organized bodies of the future which, if performed by individuals, would work both ways, blessing him who gives as well as comforting him who receives.

Our newspapers are helping this alone, and some of them are helping to say so in the most selfish motives.

Instead of, for instance, giving a dinner to a thousand newsmen out of its own imperial coffers, the Herald invites subscriptions for that purpose, takes too public money, sees that the little fellows have their dinner and then publishes a page of alleged report but real self gratulation.

Now those boys had a very fair dinner, but they were not asked for it. They sent their money to the Herald had each in his own person taken a boy and provided him with the desire of his heart.

This is a matter of so delicate a shading that

I Almost Hesitate

to trench upon it at all, certainly I would not do so with any adverse criticism, because after all the boys did get the dinner, and for one day in the year they have a very soft time, but, when you come down to it, what is a dinner a year?

And would you, having found a boy in whom you took an interest sufficient to give him a dinner, be satisfied with that? Would you consent to have the dinner of the boy go 364 days in the year entirely contented and happy because on one occasion you gave a boy a dinner? On the other hand, don't you know that the boy would doubtless be identified by the district attorney with a look at his clothing, and possibly to a certain extent in his morals?

Organized charity is impersonal. Hundreds of thousands of poor people are helped here every year by organized charity, but thousands cannot get any help at all. The organizations turn away countless hordes. There is an immunity of red tape about the doorway. There are clerks and books and registers

ROOM FIT TO COURT IN.

How to Prepare it for the Winter.

House Furnishings That Often Affect Domestic Peace.

Inscription Pad—Curious Hat-Rack—Rustic Screens.

Now that the holidays are upon us, home decoration will soon be a phrase so nagged at and abused that before the Christmas tree is fairly down and out in the alleys the subject of "art decorative" will be black and blue for six months. No wonder a new and more artistic and decorative style of home decoration will be the order of the day.

What is again utilized, and so on, and on, until they are down to the smallest size possible. These rings are used in a variety of ways. They are tied up by a ribbon or caught up against the wall as a whisk broom holder.

They are set in half and form curved legs for hats. They are hung from a nail and used for towel racks. They are arranged side by side over leaf shape and serve as tops for umbrella stands. There is no end to the use of these rings.

Among the new kind of tables to be seen in the market are curious imported examples of inlaid work. The tops, for instance, show three or four different varieties of wood, arranged in parallel lines, or in a checkered pattern, or in some other design. Heavy figures inlaid over them all, in an artistic and decorative style.

We have all seen the rustic figures which have been used for screens, and consist of a rough log, with a hole in the middle, and probably it was this which gave the idea for a screen we were recently shown.

The side aprons were two crossed sticks, painted a dead brown, in imitation of decayed wood. Between the forked upper ends of the sticks, an owl sits on the trunk, and a snake is traversing one of the sticks.

The screen is kept in place with thongs of grass like the reeds out of Chinese matting.

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